

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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Messages of Easter

In the early dawn of a quiet Sunday—the first in the history of the world—a few devoted women, heavy with sorrow, could be seen wending their way toward a new tomb in a garden, wherein, with loving hands Joseph and Arimathea had so tenderly laid the body of Jesus. It was an eventful morning, and the women were early in their journey, but the angels were earlier still, and—oh, can it be—the tomb was empty. There by the empty grave of Jesus whom they had hoped to see but did not, the weeping women, as the reward for their loving devotion, received the sweetest, the most precious messages that ever came to human kind, messages which even now come to every soul born of God. Let us linger and see what some of these messages are which this festive day brings to our hearts.

First, it was a message of love. The mission of Jesus into this world was a mission of love, and all the associations of that wonderful life, its whole story may be summed up in one word, and that word, Love. His life was a lesson of love; his death on the cross was a manifestation of the eternal, divine love of God; at the tomb, in the gloomy silence of that early morning the angels brought messages of love,—love so tender, so sweet, so precious, for here God had wrought the miracle of miracles, the crowning act of immortal love.

Second, it was a message of comfort. Those were sad hearts that came to the tomb on that first Sunday morning, souls that had been pierced by the cruel arrow of sorrow. But the angels brought a message of comfort to the mourning women. "Be not affrighted," they said. This Easter day, after almost 1900 years have passed away, we gather about the open grave of Jesus to receive the same message of comfort, for yet the world has its weeping and mourning disciples. Many times has this earth been ripped open to receive the bodies of those whom we love, but why should we weep by the grave? In a true sense that grave is empty, empty of everything that could cheer and comfort our hearts. Listen to the voice of divine revelation, hear, oh, ye sorrowing hearts, grief stricken, burdened souls, Jesus speaks. "Let not your hearts be troubled."

Third, it was a message of joy. When Jesus was born at Bethlehem, angels came to shepherds keeping

watch over their flocks by night, and announced the glad tidings of a Savior born. "Fear not, for I bring you glad tidings of great joy." But that joy was not without its mingled sorrow; speaking of the mission of the child Jesus, Simeon said to Mary his mother, "Yea, a sword shall pierce thine own soul." Thirty and three weary years of toil, and suffering, trials, and conflicts, lay before the infant babe Jesus. But the final triumph had now come. Jesus had worked out the great problem of human redemption, the victory had been won, and again the angels announce glad tidings of great joy, for the Lord of life is risen. The conflict was over, and today the civilized world stands at the empty tomb and rejoices with joy unspeakable in the risen Christ. May every soul that has named the name of Jesus share in the joy that the message of Easter brings.

Fourth, it was a message of hope. The resurrection of Jesus was the birth of a deathless hope in the hearts of all who receive him. True, hope was kindled in the hearts of many when Jesus was born. The song of the angels on that eventful Christmas morning was a song of hope. On the gloom and despair of a lost and hopeless world, the Sun of Righteousness arose in noontide splendor, and light and sunshine came into the sad and desolate hearts of guilty, lost men. But that beautiful flower soon drooped and died. The breath of a heartless world blew upon it and it faded. On the way to Emmaus the disciples said to one another, "We had hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel." All that hope had been blasted. But on the resurrection morn hope revived. The angel hand touched that faded flower, and instantly it bloomed anew in the kingdom of God. Never again will that flower fade; never again will it lose its sweet fragrance. It blooms immortal. May the dear Christ send the angel of hope to plant this flower in every human heart.

Fifth, it was a message of service. "Go and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead." It is not the story of a dead Savior, but a living, personal, risen Savior. That is the message to the church today, go and tell the story of the risen Christ. It is the great Easter commission, go. May he, the Christ of God, inspire the church to go and to send.